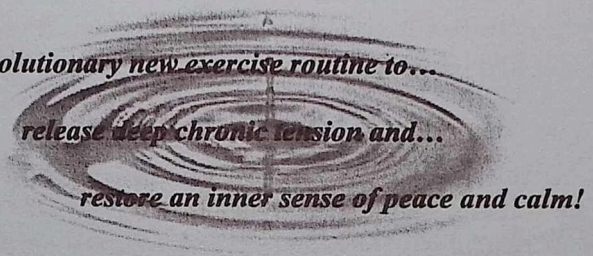
PATHWAY TO HEALING

Trauma Releasing Exercises



A revolutionary new exercise routine to…

release deep chronic tension and…

restore an inner sense of peace and calm!

The body is the greatest ally we have in healing trauma.

Keep yourself healthy through life's painful encounters.

(TRE) ®

Trauma Overview

1. **TRAUMA IS THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING OVERWHELMED.** Trauma is an overwhelming and seemingly unbearable reaction that can be caused by experiencing or witnessing the threat of death, injury or serious harm, or by learning about unexpected or violent death or serious harm. "Hard trauma" is an incident that is easily identifiable such as a car accident or an earthquake. It is a moment in time that one can identify as a disturbing experience. This is oftentimes easier to heal than "soft trauma" which is less identifiable such as prolonged psychological or emotional child abuse or spousal abuse. These may be more unconscious rather than obvious and physical. These types of abuse are often more insidious, more difficult to identify and harder to heal.

2. **HUMANS EVOLVE THROUGH TRAUMA.** As a human species, we are biologically designed to experience, endure and survive trauma. We are genetically encoded to let go of and recover from trauma as a way of ridding ourselves of any experience that obstructs or interferes with the natural evolutionary process of the human body.

3. **TRAUMA RECOVERY CREATES A DEEPER EMBRACE OF LIFE.** Trauma often overwhelms our entire sense of self. Our emotions, logic and understanding of life can be shattered. It is precisely this shattering effect that forces us to think in new ways, feel emotions at deeper levels and relate to others in more compassionate ways. People, who have healed successfully from trauma, discover that their life is richer, fuller and more caring than they had ever experienced before. This is what the

evolution of the human species is about. The inner development of compassion, caring and sensitivity to the pain of humanity emerges as a result recovering from one's own painful experiences of life. This self-renewal that happens in the recovery process occurs because the individual was forced to explore the painful depths of humanity they would otherwise not have chosen to experience. This experience creates a deeper sense of connectedness to life and stronger bonds of connectedness to others and even the universe.

4. **ALL TRAUMAS AFFECT THE PHYSICAL BODY.** Every trauma, whether it occurs in a physiological, cognitive, emotional or interpersonal form affects the physical body. The healing of trauma begins in the body; therefore, we must begin to look at the body to start the healing process.

5. **MUSCLE CONTRACTIONS PROTECT THE BODY DURING TRAUMA.** Trauma causes very deep muscle contractions designed to protect the body from harm or possible death during the traumatic episode. We need to explore this very specific pattern of muscle contraction and reverse this contraction for eventual release and subsequent physical relief.

6. **OUR NERVOUS SYSTEM RESOLVES TRAUMA REACTIONS.** Once the trauma is over the body's nervous system is designed to literally shake out this deep muscular tension and help the body return to its normal state. This shaking, much the same as we experience in fear signals the brain to release the contraction and return to a normal state of relaxation.

7. **OVEREMPHASIS ON THOUGHT DISTORTS BODY SENSITIVITY**. Due to our over emphasis on the mind, we have deadened this shaking mechanism so that it no longer reduces the muscular tension causing us to continue carrying it in our bodies long after the trauma is

over. In the case of repeated experiences of trauma, the mind will direct the body to freeze or numb out immediately to help reduce the inevitable pain of the next abusive experience. This dissociating command from the brain over rides the shaking mechanism which must be restored for effective and lasting healing.

8. **POST TRUAMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD).** PTSD is the term used for the deep muscle tension and the continuation of disturbing thoughts, emotions and feelings that persist even after the trauma is over.

9. **POST TRAUMA REACTIONS IMPRISON US INTO RELIVING THE EXPERIENCE.** Because the experience is emotionally and physiologically overwhelming, the body stores the memories, thoughts and emotions of the trauma in order to process them at a later date. The high chemical charge left in the body after trauma continually seeks a discharge. When that discharge does not occur, both the emotional and rational parts of our brains translate this excessive charge into either intense emotions such as hatred, rage, shame etc. or ideas of revenge, distrust or negative ideology.

10. **UNHEALED TRAUMA CREATES REPETITION COMPULSION BEHAVIOR.** PTSD is caused by the lack of release of the high excitement or anxiety (biochemical energy) that was generated at the time of the traumatic event. The body continues to seek a discharge from this over-stimulation so the brain unconsciously reproduces situations similar to the original trauma. This is the mind's attempt to replay the trauma scenario so that the energy can be discharged in the hopes that the victim will now become the survivor. The most common example of this is when abused children enter into abusive relationships as adults.

11. **TRAUMATIC STRESS IS A MAJOR CAUSE OF VIOLENCE.** It is now being recognized by

traumatologists that the most common cause of social and domestic violence is due to post traumatic stress disorder. Numerous psychological and sociological studies are demonstrating that previously diagnosed disorders such as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), laps of memory and hyper arousal behaviors are due to post traumatic stress disorders.

12. **TRAUMA IS PART OF THE EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS OF ALL LIVING SPECIES.** All living species on this planet experience varying degrees of trauma. Through this process, the species learns how to adapt to life threatening situations. This process of adaptation makes the species stronger and wiser to protect it from future traumatic episodes. If we did not possess this natural evolutionary instinct, we would have died as a species shortly after we were born. Trauma recovery is as natural and common as trauma itself. Accepting this sometimes unpleasant fact of life allows us to see trauma in a new light. With the recovery from each traumatic episode of our lives, we give into and accept more easily the way the universe has treated us. Paradoxically, the more we let go into life the more we discover that we can re-take control of our lives and participate once again in the precarious nature of being human. Only by letting go can we unlock ourselves from the past, be delivered into the future and prepare ourselves for our next evolutionary experience.

HISTORY

Until recently most research programs on trauma and post traumatic stress disorder were conducted in the field of psychology. Subsequently most of the recovery programs designed to help relieve symptoms of trauma and PTSD, primarily addressed the psychological and emotional dimensions of the individual. However, the most recent research in the field of trauma studies is helping to dispel this limited view. The cross-fertilization of fields of study such as psycho-biology and neuro-physiology are revealing new levels of understanding of the effects of trauma on the body. This is helping to bring about an increased awareness and acknowledgement of the critical interaction and mutual interdependency of automatic body responses and neurological processes. Whether the trauma occurs in a psychological, physical, emotional, or interpersonal form it inevitably expresses itself in the body. The field of trauma more than any other field of study is demonstrating the undeniable link between body and mind.

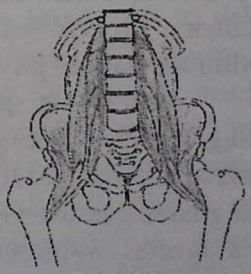
This shift in awareness is increasing the recognition that trauma is primarily an instinctual body reaction. The mind and personality simply readjust themselves to inhabit this new body. In other words, the body's natural defensive reaction to trauma creates a secondary psychological adaptive behavioral response. Acknowledging that the body has a systematic set of instinctual responses that become engaged during the time of trauma allows us to study these unconscious responses thereby reversing their effects on the individual. If these instinctual responses can be reversed, then the secondary psychological disruptions can be limited and the psyche of the individual can be restored to health much more readily.

TRAUMA Releasing Exercises

Every muscle has a series of mechanisms that are designed to contract and relax the muscles in times of safety or danger. During danger, an intricate interaction of biological, neurological and nervous system reactions occurs. This interaction causes the muscles to contract in order to protect the organism from harm or possible death. Once the danger has subsided the body is designed to shake out the excessive muscular tension that harbors the extra energy that was needed during the traumatic episode. However, due to our evolution as an ego centered species, we have deadened this shaking mechanism.

The psoas muscles are a particular set of muscles considered the fight/flight muscles of the human species. These ancient muscles stand guard like sentinels protecting the center of gravity of the human body located just in front of S3 of the spine.

During any traumatic experience the psoas muscles contract to protect the underbelly of the human animal. These muscles, that connect the back with the pelvis and the legs, remain contracted until the danger is over. To heal from trauma contractions, these deep set of muscles must shake out their protective tension to relax. When the shaking response of the psoas muscles is evoked at this powerful center of the body, it reverberates throughout the entire body looking for deep chronic tension in its path and naturally dissolving it.



Psoas Muscles

Deep Chronic Tension

Most exercises are designed to release surface level tension. This is insufficient however when dealing with the deep chronic tension created during trauma experiences. Oftentimes these milder forms of exercise leave the individual feeling helpless and confused if they fail to relieve the tension of the trauma survivor. The uniquely developed **T**rauma **R**eleasing **E**xercises although simple and painless, are specifically designed to release the deep, chronic muscle contractions created by severe shock or trauma. They employ the natural mechanisms of the body to dissolve chronic tension.

In order to understand this process better, it is helpful to understand how all species deal with traumatic experiences. Animal species that are still living in their natural habitats often encounter trauma. They however, unlike humans, still have access to their natural ability to discharge the excess energy generated during trauma and completely recover and move on with life.

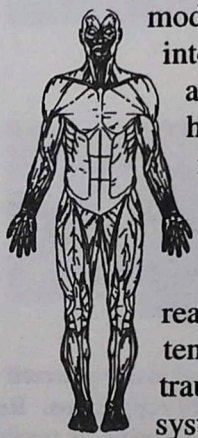
The trauma response of the human animal is similar to that of most other animal species. Therefore, the human's response to trauma can be found in their roots as an animal or biological organism. Similarly, the mysterious key that activates the release mechanism of our natural recovery process can be found discretely hidden right within the natural physiology of our bodies as well.

As a living species on this planet, we like all other living species are genetically encoded to experience, survive and resolve trauma. It is part of our natural instinct that guarantees we will not only survive but actually evolve as a species. Without it the human animal would already have become extinct.

Post trauma reactions are caused by the residual undischarged excitement (biochemical energy) generated at the time of the event. If this high state of

aroused energy is prevented from being discharged in the body it remains trapped in a bio-neural-physiological loop that causes a repetition compulsion behavior. Until the brain receives a signal from the central nervous system that the danger is over, the body will continue to repeat the bio-neural pattern of protection and defense. The key to a successful recovery from trauma is to activate the organism's natural release mechanism that signals the body to return to a state of rest and recuperation.

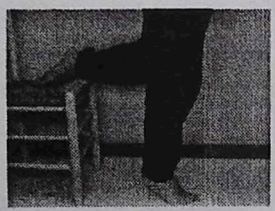
The combination of psycho-bio-neurological research has helped us to recognize that the trauma recovery process can be successfully engaged via body modalities in connection with psychological interventions. **Trauma Releasing Exercises** are based on this premise. Trauma studies have demonstrated that the human body is designed to react in certain ways during traumatic episodes. By studying the body's reaction to traumatic events, it is possible to reverse this anatomical reaction and systematically dissolve the tension pattern created as a result of traumatic defense patterning. Through systematic cross-cultural studies of traumatic reactions from trauma due to war, political and domestic violence, **TRAPS** has managed to identify and isolate a specific series of muscular contractions. These contractions are instinctual to the human species and transcend cultural differences. **Trauma Releasing Exercises** were developed from these studies. They are specific exercises designed to release deep chronic tension from the center of gravity of the body outward. Follow the exercise routine as outlined here. However, once you become more accustomed to the routine you can adjust and modify it to suit your body's abilities.



Exercise #1

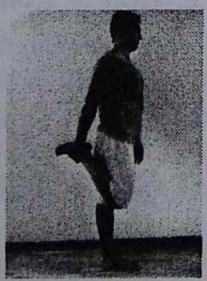
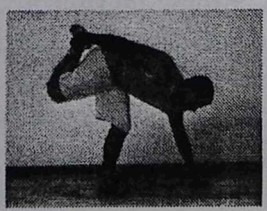
Roll from side to side on the bottom of your feet creating a stretch on the sides of your ankles.

Exercise #2



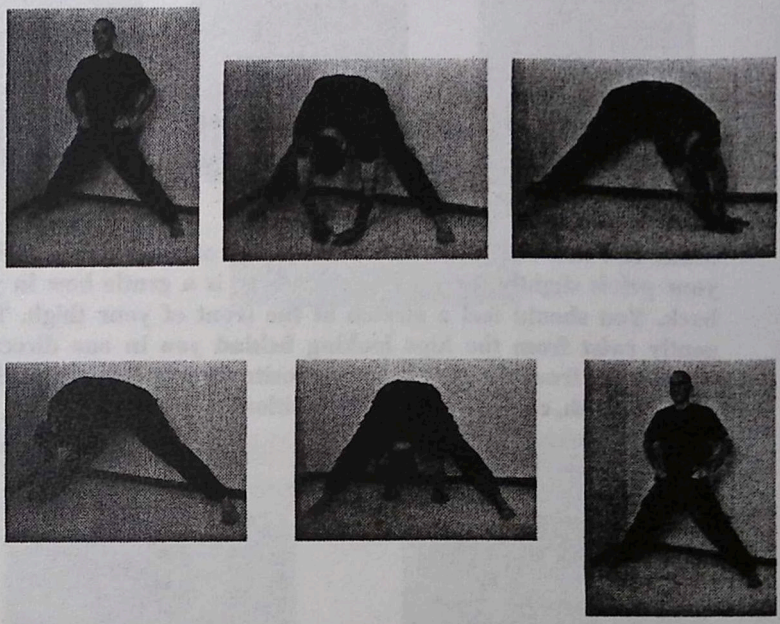
Put one foot on the seat of a chair and raise and lower yourself onto your toes. Repeat this exercise slowly for 10-20 repetitions. Repeat this exercise for both feet. This may produce burning or tension in the leg muscles. Just shake the leg vigorously and the muscles should return to normal.

Exercise #3

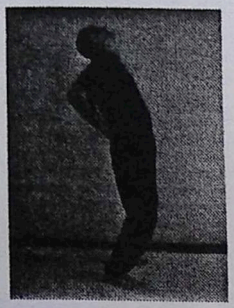
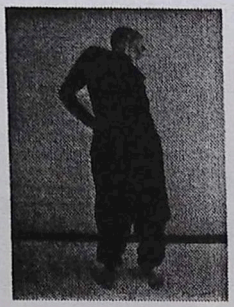
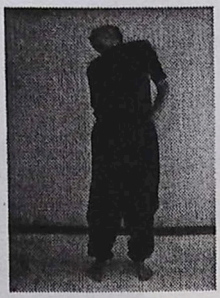
Hold one foot with your hand. Slowly bend down and touch the ground with your free hand. While touching the ground, bend your standing knee as deeply as you can and then straighten it. Repeat this process for 10-15 times, depending on the strength of your legs.

Exercise #4



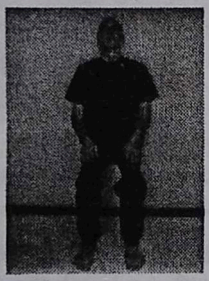
Stand with your legs spread apart so that there is some tension on the inner leg muscles. Bend forward until you touch the ground. You should feel a stretch on the inner thigh (adductors) and the backs of the legs (hamstrings). Then slowly walk your hands over to one foot. Hold this position for three slow deep breaths. Then walk your hands over to the other foot. Again, hold this position for three deep breaths. Then walk your hands back to the middle and reach between your legs behind you. Hold this position for three deep breaths. You might begin to feel some mild shaking in your legs. Allow this to happen. To complete the exercise slowly come back into a standing position.

Exercise #5

Make two fists and place them on the top of your buttocks. Push your pelvis slightly forward so that there is a gentle bow in your back. You should feel a stretch at the front of your thigh. Then gently twist from the hips looking behind you in one direction. Turn again from the hips in the opposite direction looking behind you. To finish, come to a standing position.

Exercise #6

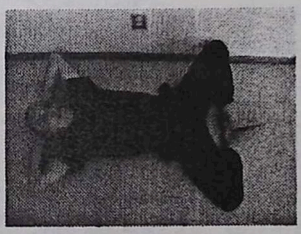
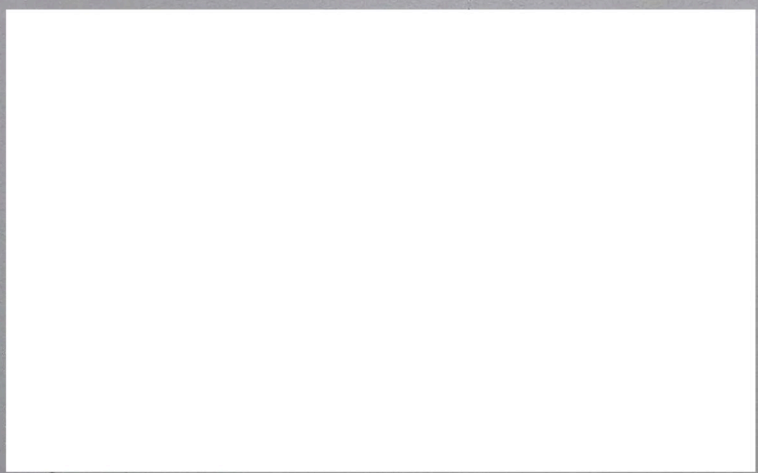


Sit with your back against the wall as though there was a chair underneath you. This will put a stress on the quadriceps muscles. After a few minutes, you might begin to feel some quivering in these muscles. When this

position becomes painful, move up the wall about two more inches. The quivering may get slightly stronger.

Once again, if this becomes painful move your back up the wall two more inches. You should try to find a position where your legs are quivering and there is no pain. After five minutes of quivering come off the wall and hang over forward. Keep your knees slightly bent while you touch the ground. The quivering will most likely increase. Stay there for about three to four minutes.

Exercise #7



Begin the exercise by laying flat on your back put the bottoms of your feet together and let your knees fall open as wide as they go in a relaxed manner for one minute. Then raise your pelvis off the ground about three inches while keeping your knees open. Hold this position for one minute. You might begin to feel a slight bouncing of the pelvis.